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Media Contact:
Julia Robertson
Program Manager
(801) 538-9161

News Release

Pregnancy Dangers Lurk at Holiday Parties

Fetal health experts warn of seasonal foods and beverages to avoid

(Salt Lake City, UT) - Many drinks and foods commonly served as appetizers or main courses during the holidays can lead to pregnancy problems. To help moms-to-be have a fun holiday *and* be safe, the Pregnancy Risk Line has developed a list of foods and beverages to avoid or be consumed in moderation this season.

“It’s important that we spread the word, especially at this time of year, about avoiding alcohol and potentially dangerous foods in pregnancy,” said Lynn Martinez, a counselor for the Risk Line.

Beverages

Many **spiced ciders** and **eggnog** contain alcohol and are commonly served around the holidays. If you’re not sure if there is alcohol in what’s being served to you, just ask. Also, avoid other drinks that might contain wine or other types of alcohol.

Eggnog

Avoid eggnog unless it is labeled “**pasteurized**” and again, make sure it contains no alcohol.

Rum Balls

Delicious? Yes. A good idea during pregnancy? No. Ask the host if they contain real rum and, if so, pass them by. If craving chocolate, reach for sweets that don’t contain alcohol.

“It’s also important for moms-to-be to limit high-calorie foods like desserts,” said UDOH dietitian Patrice Isabella, “And, if your health care provider agrees, get regular physical activity to avoid excess weight gain during the holidays,” Isabella added.

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Soft Cheeses - (Panela, cotija, queso fresco, blue-veined cheeses, brie, camembert)

Soft cheeses can be made from unpasteurized milk, which can contain harmful bacteria like *Listeria* and *Campylobacter*. These bacteria can cause serious illness and infection that can harm a developing baby and increase the risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, uterine infection, premature labor, and death in the newborn. To avoid this problem, make sure to look for cheeses bearing the “**made with pasteurized milk**” label.

Meats

Cocktail franks, refrigerated pate' and deli meats can also contain *Listeria* bacteria.

Meats need to be thoroughly cooked so the bacteria are killed. Avoid these and all meat spreads and choose safer spreads like peanut butter, almond butter and pasteurized cream cheeses. If the host is serving **turkey, ham** or **roast beef**, ask if the meat has been cooked to the correct temperature by using a meat thermometer. Medium and well done meats are the meats to eat during pregnancy.

Tuna

Fish is an important food to eat during pregnancy, but high levels of methylmercury can be harmful to an unborn child. Eat fish in moderation. The recommendation for fish consumption during pregnancy is no more than 12 oz. of large predator fish (tuna, shark, tilefish, and king mackerel) per week.

Call the Pregnancy Risk Line at 1-800-822-2229 if you have other questions about foods to avoid or questions about any exposures during pregnancy.

The Risk Line is a joint effort of the Utah Department of Health and University of Utah Health Sciences and is staffed Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

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